2: Ray E-5 (1928-1930) 1932 Southeast Salish
Sanpoil

THE PATTERN OF LIFE

DOMINANT CULTURAL TRENDS

Certain dominant trends in Sanpoil culture vitally affected the life of every invidivual born into that culture. They colored the whole outlook upon the world and determined the attitudes taken toward it. Conservatism and radicalism, faith and skepticism were defined in terms of these concepts. They were: pacifism and the equality of men. 181 554 622 721 829

Pacifism was carried to such a degree that heinous offenses by raiding parties were left unrevenged. After one such raid the offenders were pursued for a short distance but the chief soon dissuaded the injured ones from attempting retaliation. "Our children are dead and our property is destroyed. We are sad. But can we bring our children to life or restore our property by killing other people? It is better not to fight. It can do no good." The Sanpoil returned home. Such action was not unusual. The most eloquent speeches of Sanpoil chiefs were delivered in the interest of maintaining peaceful relations with all peoples. These efforts were successful. Theory was put into practice. No warfare, either offensive or defensive, could be recalled by the father of any living man. Nor was the principle of pacifism applied only to foreign relations. On the contrary, this ideal was even more important in fashioning the daily lives of men. From earliest infancy the child was drilled in the tenets of peaceful existence with his fellows. The pugnacious man was a public enemy with whom respectable people associated as little as possible. It was clearly one of the principal duties of the chief to see that the peaceful life of the community was not disturbed. This he accomplished by counselling his people, arbitrating petty differences and presenting a good example by his own conduct.

The success of the principle was especially evident within the household. Groups of ten or twenty persons lived together over periods of many years without the development of a single serious altercation. A safety valve was provided. It was a person's privilege to leave at any time and he could always find a home elsewhere. But one was not privileged to remain and demand his "rights" when he developed a grievance. As a result family trouble was unheard of. 181 626 829

Insignificant matters and major problems alike were decided with reference to what action would make for the greatest harmony. Even in the mythology this basic attitude was reflected. For example, the man who decided not to take revenge upon his brother who had stolen his wife, was commended for his decision. 181

Sanpoil insistence upon the equality of men was of an impressive order. Class distinctions were unthinkable. Slavery was an unaccountable custom of foreigners. When a new chief had to be selected any man was eligible. The selection was made by popular vote on the basis of moral character alone. He remained one of the people. He was as approachable as any man in the group. His powers were preponderantly advisory rather than dictatorial. Every adult citizen was a member of the general assembly of his village. Nor did wealth carry with 554 556 567 622 829

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181 it an advance in status. Indeed, wealth was rare. Only shamans could properly
226 be counted rich men and whatever prestige they possessed was the result of their
476 unusual supernatural powers, not their riches. The scarcity of wealth was again
554 an outcome of the belief in the equality of mankind. Why should one man have
556 more than another? Yet nature was bountiful—was not every man deserving of
735 a living? The solution of these questions was a modified communistic organiza-
829 tion. The huge catches of salmon made each summer at the great fish traps were divided entirely equally between all present, foreigners included. A man need have taken no part in the fishing activities to be entitled to a share in the daily distributions. Likewise the meat obtained on a hunting expedition was divided evenly among all those who had taken part regardless of what members actually killed the game. But room was left for individual initiative. Salmon taken with a spear was the property of the individual spearman (but every man was given his turn on the fishing platform). And game taken by the individual hunter was his personal property (except that the first deer killed by a boy had to be divided among the townspeople to the exclusion of himself). Women always retained the products of their individual labors at berry picking or root gathering. Yet it was never necessary for a person to go hungry if there was food in the village. A single meal or a whole winter's lodging and meals were never denied a man.

181 Thus almost the whole economic life of the Sanpoil was built around the
578 principle that one man was equal to another. Other quite foreign aspects of life
626 were affected as well. Social control was simplified. Stealing was practically un-
681 known. Why should one steal? The usual executive, judicial and police organi-
827 zation for dealing with criminals was minimized with the absence of one of the commonest of griminals, the thief. The deeply instilled dislike of conflict worked to reduce still more the number of torts committed.

181 In the quest of supernatural power we see equality again playing a part.
554 This sponsorship was open equally to every man and every woman, not to only
776 a privileged few as in some other parts of North America. There were very few
829 Sanpoil men who did not succeed in the quest to the extent of gaining at least one guardian spirit.

181 It is not argued here that all individuality was levelled down by these domi-
183 nating cultural tendencies or that other cultural drives of consequence were not
578 present. Not all conformed alike to the ideals of peacefulness and equality. As
626 great a range of individual variation was evidenced as in any comparable culture
829 and greater than in many. There were nonconformists and skeptics. There were those who liked conflict, those who deemed themselves superior to their fellows and those who liked to accumulate private property. But these types were in the minority. They were the undesirables, the radicals. They were the individuals who made social problems.

178 It is interesting to note that here in the center of the Plateau, an area hitherto
181 considered a cultural mixture of Northwest coast and Plains traits, we find one
554 of the outstanding cultural trends in direct contrast to the Coast, the other to the Plains. At opposite poles were the Sanpoil principles of equality and the rigid

484 439 Horses were traded to the Plains people; fast horses brought good prices because they could catch buffalo. Margaret tanned the hides of buffalo that they killed there. She did not trade with the Plains people for buckskin clothing and feather headgear, because Sersepkin was not interested in these articles.

186 648 829 The Blackfoot had ceased fighting with the Plateau hunters a few years before Margaret's trip. After the whites came, the Indians saw that the whites were a common enemy. Before leaving the Plains, the chiefs had a meeting with Sersepkin and agreed that the Indians should not fight among themselves, for they had together many enemies. "We talk different, and we cannot understand one another; but we have the same ways and the same kind of skin; therefore we should not fight among ourselves. So whenever you people come over here to hunt buffalo, you can have our hunting grounds. We will all be like brothers." Sersepkin gave a speech of approval. They agreed to divide what they had in common, however little, and said that in time they might all come to talk the same language. The Blackfoot explained that they had fought for their hunting grounds in the past because they lived entirely on the buffalo.

484 439 On the return, a baby of Margaret's died; one who had been born during the trip. They brought back about twenty horses transporting tanned skins, and gave many of the skins to old men and women who needed them. They arrived in Loomis during the first part of July, the trip having taken a year.

439 The Thompson are the only people to whom the Sinkaietk sold hemp. About every other year the Thompson come down to Kartar territory in the fall to buy hemp, bringing salmon and skins. Lucy Joe's mother and aunts stayed up at night getting the hemp ready when the Thompson were coming. After picking and bundling the hemp they left it in the branches of a certain tree in hills near Kartar creek until the Thompson came. Then all went to the tree and traded. Recently Kartar people would go on occasion to Thompson country to trade for salmon. Formerly they were enemies.

484 439 [782] [illegible] Cecile has gone with two Kartar trading parties to Thompson country. The trip takes six days on horseback. They crossed from Kartar to Tonasket, then to Loomis and up the Similkameen River to t'sa'we, where they brushed themselves with fir boughs, casting these on the large pile that was there, before turning north. They asked the place to protect them that they might return to it alive and make another offering. They believe that a person who ignores this custom will sicken and die. In Thompson country, the men discover those people who have salmon to trade. Then the women bargain their bitter-root, hemp, blankets and robes to the Thompson men for salmon. The Thompson, who have three kinds of salmon to trade (a large

776 Spider	gave power to cure spider bites by touching (Suszen).
825 Grasshopper which sat on a warm rock until the rock got cold	gave very strong power (Cecile or Lucy Joe).
Tree on which a woodpecker has worked	gave power to become wealthy, because the chips lying around it on the ground represented the riches of the woodpecker (Johnnie and Michel).
[821] Rainbow power, from the water where the end of the rainbow touched	unspecified
"The biggest and oldest of all the deer"	gave strong power
A deer swimming in the winter	gave power for swimming (Suszen).
A lost animal	gave bad power (Suszen).
An animal hurt and trying to get well	gave bad power (Suszen).
[823] A dead animal	gave bad power (Suszen).
Rock	(Cecile).
776 Tree stump	(Cecile; David).
Sun	did not give power (Cecile); in old times, it gave power for curing anything (Michel).
824 Moon	did not give power (Cecile and Michel).
Stars	did not give power (Cecile; Michel).
Thunder	gave power for fighting (Michel; Suszen)
[769] Stürtsin root	(Michel).
Graveyard	(This is Colville: it gave power for gambling [Johnnie].)
[826] Bone	gave bad power (Suszen).
Dung	In the myth in which the Creator gave the animals their names, Coyote is told that his own dung will be his power. The narrators laughed at this. We never heard of dung as a guardian spirit in modern times, though theoretically it would not be impossible.
[827]	
776 Gun	gave power for hunting (Johnnie, in answer to a leading question).
829 Strap	gave power to keep a horse's cinch tight (Johnnie, in answer to a leading question).
Brush	gave power to "sweep out sickness" (Johnnie in answer to a leading question).
Knife which had been used to sever a child's umbilical cord	unspecified